千歌・梨子・曜編

公野櫻子

イラスト＋伊能津／清瀬赤目

ラブライブ! School idol diary サンシャイン!!

Takami Chika / Sakurauchi Riko / Watanabe You

ラブライブ! School idol project サンシャイン!!

NOT FOR SALE

BCXA-1170

Love Live! Sunshine!! School Idol Diary

Aqours' Sea Side Diary

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01 - Takami Chika

The First Song

We live in a town in Ito, Shizuoka Prefecture, surrounded by sea and mountains. A little town on an inlet, called Uchiura.
It contains one little beach and two convenience stores.
We also have hot springs, but there are quite a few hot springs all over Ito, so that's not much of an appeal point, is it?
Its one point of pride is the view of Mt. Fuji from across the sea. Yep, this is truly the greatest scenery in the world!
... Well, that's what all the old folks around here say, but to be honest, when you see it every day, even "the greatest scenery" starts getting old real fast...
We're all born and raised in this small town, and ever since elementary school, we've always been in classes of under 20 people, and we see the same faces and the same sights day after day. It's just unavoidable that we'd start taking these unchanging seas and mountains for granted.
Nothing ever changes here, but the sky in this town is really beautiful to look at.

Today, I've decided to become a school idol!
Ehehehe☆
'Cause... 'cause, you know!
You gotta listen to this!
I just met someone!
My destined one ♥♥♥

She was inside the screen of the tablet I kept begging for nonstop as I was starting high school.
She was incredibly dazzling, and shining with brilliance.
I'm sure if I had writing classes that day, I'd have come up with some amazing material!
That's just too bad♪

You see, when I first saw her, I was surprised that a girl as cute as her could really exist.
I felt this squeezy pain in the back of my chest.
They stood on a stage lit up in various colors.
You would never believe they were normal high school girls. They were more than merely people to look up to. It's like they came from a wonderland beyond the clouds.
Dressed in their cute outfits, those nine girls smiled and danced, as if they could pop out of the screen at any moment.

Their faces, looking at me through the screen, were so radiant.
So dazzling.
I couldn't breathe. All I could do was watch.
I couldn't look away.
It was like my entire body was sucked in.

Hmm, now that I think back on it, I don't think words can express what I felt at that moment.
I just don't know what to say.
But,
Anyway, all I know is, although I was just a girl from a deserted high school in a rural seaside town, everything in my mind got rewritten then.
I want to be like that too.
The school idol group μ's, hailing from Akihabara, Tokyo.
Nine unique members dancing on a shining prismatic stage.
I can't forget what their smiles gave to me.

Ehehe♥
At 16 years old, my heart was moved and stimulated for the first time
Aaah, I just wanna scream it across the blue seas! "I love μ's! I'm totally gonna be like μ's someday, too!"

Yeah.
Chika Takami, age 16.
2nd Year at Uranohoshi Girls High School. Starting today, I'm gonna start dashing towards my beloved μ's!

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

My heroes, μ's.
Even among them, the one I'm the biggest fan of is their leader, Honoka.
With the other members keeping things together, I'm not sure if I should really be calling her the leader, but the entire reason μ's got started is because Honoka came up with the idea to become school idols and save their school from the brink of shutdown! So, I think she's the leader of μ's anyway♪
They're from the huge city of Tokyo, and from Akihabara, smack-dab in the middle of the place, to boot. You see that place on the news all the time.
When I first heard they were about to shut down because the birth rate decline meant there weren't enough kids around, I couldn't believe it.
But, when I read a special feature on μ's, I somehow felt like these fancy high school girls from the city went through the same things we are.
For some reason, my chest started hurting again.
I think I got sad and lonely thinking that my school might go away. Just like Honoka and her friends did.
But, at the same time...
Well, I know it's ridiculous, but...
I felt like it was our fault for some reason.
I get an ache in my chest whenever I think about our school shutting down.
It's just, I'm a carefree girl, and that's just not my style, so I've never talked about it to anyone else, and besides, there's nothing I can do about something so complicated! So, I tried not to think about it.

Of course, Honoka and the rest of μ's never said anything like that in the article, but I think Honoka definitely felt the same way.
Countless girls have gone to our school, but that's all going to end with our generation.
The school's been losing students year after year, and people have always said it wouldn't be any surprise if it got shut down soon.
It's like a game of cards. Every time, someone has to get stuck with the old maid.
But, now that it's us holding the old maid, I start feeling like it's our fault that the school's going away.
I feel sad and lonely. And...
Regretful.
Why now?
Why does it have to be when we're here?
I know there's nothing I can do about it,
but I feel regretful.
I don't want this.
I don't want to see this school shut down.
That's why I can't help but wonder if there's anything we can do.
Honoka gave me the answer to that.
As long as you never give up, and keep trying, your dreams will come true.

And then, while I was watching Honoka, I thought of something else.
Even if this dream doesn't actually come true,
Just believing and progressing towards your dream can make people shine so brightly.
And that alone is enough!
I'm so gonna believe too.

I love μ's.
I'm sure they have real power.
School idols have the power to push others into action like this.
And I'm sure I'm the biggest proof of that there is.
So, I'm going to believe in the same thing Honoka did.
Nobody wants to take the old maid,
but if you do take it, it's not pointless or reckless to want to do something about it.

When I listen to the songs μ's sings, I start thinking like that's obvious.
Whenever I start thinking about the school shutting down, I look around the school. All I see are the beautiful seas and mountains. The houses are just little dots on this field of green, and the prefectural road running along the sea is the only thing that makes this town look like an actual town.
Still, I know we're really different from Tokyo, which remains heavily populated. Everyone's talking about the national birth rate decline, and amidst all that, nothing in the world can get us more students around here.
Even I know that much.
But, I already chose to believe.
So, I'll start dashing from here.
I'm sure we have it far, far worse than μ's.
We have almost no students in the first place, and we're all country girls, and I don't even know how to be a school idol either.
And I can't think of anyone who'd attend our events, other than the old ladies from the fishing co-op.
But,
It doesn't matter how little it is.
I want to get closer to μ's.
I want to tell everyone that the emotions μ's gave me are genuine.

Found a New Heroine♪

Our home, Uchiura, is on the Ito peninsula.
The middle of the peninsula is surrounded by steep mountains, so you get villages spreading out along the sea everywhere, but Uranohoshi Girls Academy is on the very top of a small cape sticking out from the beach. It seriously is a small, no-name private school that only locals would know about.
It's already a miracle that a private high school exists here in the first place, but there's a historical reason for it.
So, according to some family records, the magistrate who governed this place was really into education, and when the famous Commodore Perry sailed from America into Ito on his black ships, the magistrate was so amazed at the sight of those ships that he decided that people had to learn western culture, and that educating the youth was the #1 priority!
And then, his descendants... uh, I'm pretty sure this happened before the war?
Ehehe, I'm bad at history, so I don't know which war "the war" is, exactly♪
But anyway, that guy's descendents started raving about how we need to put more focus on educating girls!
So, they took a few sisters who had been sent to a nearby church from abroad, hired them as English teachers, and started a girls' school, and that's how it all began.
Well? Pretty amazing, right♪
I know♥
The power of Ura High is amazing!
I've gotta live up to that history and do my best as a school idol to keep the school open! Just kidding♪
To be honest, the student council president, Dia, was the one who told me everything I just told you♥
Ehehe♪

But, regardless of its amazing origins, this school's got almost no students now, and for us, it's just a matter of fact that we only have one class of students for each grade.
And, the choir, which has been famous ever since the founding of the school, now only has 15 members, and the only team sports we can compete in at this point are basketball and softball.
Ura High's total student count doesn't even reach 3 digits, and it does have a homey atmosphere, if that's what you wanna call it.
But, still...
Waaaahhh!
It's too underpopulated for my ambitions to bear any fruit!
Judging by the number of kids living nearby, there's zero chance we'll get any more students, plus they've already made the final decision to close the school, so you definitely could say there's nothing to do about it now.
But, first things first, how do I get new members in this situation?
That's the first problem!
With so few students, basically everyone already belongs to a club to keep those from getting shut down.
There's really just nothing I can do.
This town doesn't have enough teens.

So, on that day...
I'd decided to become a school idol like μ's, and this was the day I started gathering club members.

I hadn't listened to any of the teacher's morning announcements. All I was thinking about was how to break the topic with the others.
I was born and raised in Uchiura.
I'm the youngest girl of the family, and we've been running the hot spring inn Tochiman in Uchiura for three generations. I know almost everything there is to know about the town, and I'm proud to say there isn't a single face I don't know in these parts♪
But, that means that in this student body of under a hundred people, I already kinda know who's absolutely not going to join, and who would join me.
Maybe those are my "animal instincts" that my childhood friend Kanan always compliments me on? Ehehe♥
According to those "animal instincts," that very same Kanan is definitely on the "would join me" list.

And then, I'll need to use my connections to grab some of my 2nd-year classmates, and I'd like some 1st-years too.
I think if we had some cute 1st-years as members, everyone would mellow out♥
And, we should also get the prettiest girl in school, if we can. After all, school idols represent the school they're from.
Yeah, so, I'm gonna have to pass out fliers and recruit more aggressively from now on, and maybe then it'll be like, "Huh!? You just kept on asking me, and then eventually I just kinda joined at some point♥" That sorta brute force approach might be best?
Ehehe♪
After all, although it'd still be best if some people actually asked me if they could join, the girls in Uchiura are all too shy♥
They'd refuse, like "Oh, no, I could never do this," or "We can't get an audience out here in the middle of nowhere"♪
So, I was thinking I'd do my best to recruit hard enough to make them forget their shyness…

And then, at that moment...
The bell suddenly rang loudly, signalling the start of the period.
My eyes looked to the teacher at the podium.
Ahem, ahem, ahem!
And I'm pretty sure I heard the teacher say this,
"A transfer student will be joining this class."

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

"Kanan, Kanan, Kanaaaaan! Oh my god, oh my god! Oh! My!! Gooood!!!" I screamed as I ran towards Kanan at the shore.
Kanan, not acting particularly surprised, turned to me, as if asking, *what is it this time?* with her gaze.
"Oh my god, oh my god! Oh my god! Transfer student! Transfer student in my class!"
That did surprise Kanan a little, and her hand stopped adjusting the jet ski she uses to go back to her island.
"A transfer student in her second year of high school? That's pretty rare."
"Not just in my 2nd year! I've never even seen a transfer student in my life! Can you believe transfer students actually exist in real life!?"
Kanan giggles. "Oh, it's your first? I had one in my class in elementary school."

"H-Hmph! Not like there's so much of a difference between one and zero, anyway! And besides, it's gonna be one for me when she gets here, so that makes us even♥ Nishishi♪"

"Sigh... You sure are competitive, Chika."

Exhausted, Kanan beckons me over with her eyes. She wraps her arms around my head, and gently strokes my hair.

"Well, that's great news. Now Ura High will have one more student," Kanan says. She's known that I've been worrying about the school closing down. My body jumps out of Kanan's arms on its own as I remember what I was going to say.

"Oh, right! That's right, Kanan! It's more than that! We might even get another member for our school idol group!"

Kanan squints at me, puzzled. "What do you-"

"Just where do you think this transfer student's from? Don't be surprised when you hear this, okay? She comes from... drumroll, please... Akihabara, Toyko!"

Kanan seems to be thinking, *oy vey*, as she watches my voice rise to an excited squeal.

"You mean Akihabara? The same Akihabara your beloved μ's is from? Well, I think that's cool, but just because she's from Tokyo doesn't mean she's gonna be interested in school idols. It's good to be helping transfer students out, but if you chase her around too much-"

"Yeah, I know. I'll go easy on her so she doesn't start hating me, of course♪" I reply, jumping with joy once more. And then, when I think about how the transfer student's gonna be, I do another jump.

Kanan might not agree, but I'm sure of it.

I feel like like that transfer student, arriving at this moment, has the power to make great changes to my fate♥♥♥

02 - Riko Sakurauchi

My Destined One (Part 1/2)

"Now you gotta be a school idol, right? I mean, you're sooo cute♪ Be an idol with me!"

As her powerful, direct gaze focused on me, these were the first words out of her mouth.
Now that I remember how dumbfounded I was...
Hehe♥
It's kinda funny to think about now.

I mean,
I had just transferred in, and I was really nervous then.
Everyone at Uranohoshi Girls Academy was nicer than I was expecting, though.
But, being as shy and nervous as I am, I couldn't even look anyone in the face at first. I tried not to make eye contact with anyone who called out to me, and I was always looking for a place to be alone.
I was running away.
That's why I would get scared when Chika gazed into my face with her brilliantly shining eyes.
It was like none of my emotions could hide from her direct eyes.
"I-I could never become a idol..." I'd say, desperately trying to avert my gaze, and then Chika would act like she had something else to do, and run back the way she came.

Back then, the art supply room was my refuge.
I was in the art club before I transferred, and because I love drawing, I loved the art room. That one room remains the clearest in my memory.
The empty art supplies room, always smelling of dry paint and turpentine oil.
For some reason, that scent always calms me down.
Even in a school I'd just transferred to, I could find a little bit of peace.
And, it was only in the art supply room that my own words would come spilling out.
"Just because I'm from Tokyo doesn't mean I'm fashionable or trendy or cute at all..."
"Yeah, I've played piano ever since I was a kid, but anyone could tell from first glance that someone as boring as me couldn't become a school idol!"
"Honestly, I think the other girls are much more cheerful and cute and suited to be school idols. It's not fair that I get so much attention just because I transferred from Tokyo"
"I wonder it Chika will give up soon. But, when I imagine her finally giving up and not talking to me anymore, it makes me feel uneasy..."

Ugh, I'm so gloomy.
Even I can tell.
I'm an indecisive coward.
And, I can never manage to speak my mind clearly. Or rather, I don't really have anything special to say in the first place.

I just mix myself into the crowd and wait for someone else to say something, or get people fired up, or take action.
I've got that sort of passive personality.
I don't like it either.
I'm sure it would be great if I could become a energetic and cheerful person who can assert herself. Yeah, if I could be like Chika, with my eyes shining earnestly as I tell people, "let's become school idols!"
But, every time, no matter how deeply I look into myself, I can never find anything I want to do or anything I want to assert.
I'm empty inside.
I've always thought about how wonderful it would be if I were filled with something of my own, just like Chika is.
I envy her.
Chika, don't pay so much attention to me just because I transferred from Tokyo.
You should be school idols with the other lively, cute girls in Uranohoshi instead.
I think you'll make a great group.
That's something I can guarantee you as a former resident of Akihabara♥
You're more than a match for the girls in Tokyo♪
And then, I'd be happy if I could preserve the sight of your group in action with my art.
Yeah.
I'd be a bit lonely, not being ther with you, but if I became a school idol with you, I'd just drag you down.
I'll watch over your successes from the cover of this art supply room♥

That's how I thought back then.
Chika was tough, raised in the seaside town Uchiura, with enough energy in her to barrel straight through the rushing waves and wind, while I was weak like a dandelion seed, fluttering in the shade. We could never understand each other.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

"Hey, hey hey hey hey hey hey! Now that we've come so far, I'll ask just one last time♥ You wanna come hang out with me?"
On that day, I was walking down the hall during break time when Chika, grinning, popped up out of nowhere and grabbed my hands.
The words "one last time" threw me off-balance.
"J... just one last time?" I replied.
"Oop-" I tried to cover my mouth, but it was too late.
Chika's mouth opened into a great, big smile, and her eyes looked upwards into my face.
"Oh, finally caught your interest!? Woohoo! Oh, yeah! I'm so happy! So, there's an event in Uchiura, and I was hoping you'd come with me♥♥♥ I mean, it'd be so lonely to go to a special event like this all by myself, right♪ Just consider it an act of pity for me, alright? Please, pay Chikacchi some company!" As she talked, Chika reached her hand out to me, looking as if she might break into dance at any minute.
Uh, I think Chika would be able to find lots of other people to go with her, though...
As if reading my mind, Chika said, "Ehehe♥ Well, it looks like everyone's busy on that day. Now that we're second-years, everyone's gotta help out at home or look after their siblings and stuff, so they're pretty busy. My childhood friend Kanan is always helping out at her family's diving shop over the weekends, You has

high dive practice, and everyone else says they're not going to the event. The only one around here with any free time is me, 'cause I'm a widdle baby and nobody trusts me to get anything done♪ Yeah? Yeah yeah yeah♥ So, please! I'd be so happy if you could go with me! If I bring someone as cute as you, I'm totally gonna be the hero of the event♪ Besides, after asking you to become a school idol every day, we've totally become friends at this point, anyway♥"
Chika giggled, "Nihihi!"
W-well then, it's not like anyone needs me for anything, either...
But, my heart skipped a beat.
"We've totally become friends."
As soon she said that...
I felt my face warming up.
Have we totally become friends now?
Now that she mentioned it, I felt that way too.
After all, Chika was so passionately recruiting me to become a school idol day after day.
Even when I refused, and ran away, and hid so she wouldn't see me, Chika never minded that. Every time she saw me, she wore a broad grin as she ran over.
"Oh, there you are, Riko♥♥"
Chika's cheery voice would greet me every morning when I came to school.
Even now, I can still hear her.
After transferring from so far away, I had trouble adjusting to my new environment.
I'm more cowardly than most people, and I was nervous about my new life, but Chika's bright voice would blow all that away every morning.
While she shouted, "Let's be school idols together!" and chased me across the school, I grew familiar with Uranohoshi's campus.
That's right.
The truth is, the days after I transferred to Uranohoshi Girls Academy were like exact opposites to the uneasiness that came before. Those bright days were filled with life and vigor. Just as the shining sun illuminates the blue seas and vast skies of Uchiura.

So,
Even though I really did want to help make Chika's wish come true,
I only wish it didn't have to be through school idols. I can't stand being the center of attention, so it's the worst kind of activity for me.
Sorry, Chika.
So, if we're just going to an event in town, then by all means, allow me to accompany you.
Once I showed a faint, shy smile to Chika, she didn't even wait for me to actually say my response.
"Oh! You'll go!? really!? Yaaay♥ I'm so happy! A date with Riko, this Saturday♪" Chika shouted as she bounced around the hallway.
Y-you don't have to make such a big deal out of it.
I felt my face going red with embarrassment, but I was still happy.
At the time, I was thinking that even if I couldn't become a school idol, I was still happy to be friends with Chika like this.

My Destined One (Part 2/2)

"Dun dun dun dunnnn♪ Uchiura's big springtime event, the Uchiura Children's Beach Festival!"
That's where Chika took me.
Uchiura's sole elementary school, a ways downhill from Ura High.
It's near the prefectural road going along the sea, but it's surrounded by green.
"Children's festival..."

The sunlit grounds offered no place to hide, and there were several horizontal banners and small stalls around.
They offered superball fishing, rice crackers with sauce, choco bananas, and cold Ramune.
And, scattered here and there across the grounds were game corners for a chopstick gun shooting gallery, mini-basketball, coin tosses, and such, apparently designed by the kids.
"Okay, so this is Uchiura's big springtime event..."
I was a bit disappointed, but, as soon as Chika waked in smiling, we were welcomed by a chorus of cheers.
"Oh, it's Chika!
"Over here, Chika! Come on!"
"Yay, that's customer number one♪"
The kids surrounded us immediately.
"You know these kids?" I timidly ask Chika as the kids crowd around us.
Embarrassed, she laughed, "Ehehe, well, we all know each other around here!"

So, we became customer number one for the Uchiura Children's Beach Festival, and went through the shops and game corners.
Just as Chika said, she didn't have anyone else to go with. While the kids had put in considerable effort preparing the stations, there were almost no adult customers.
The elementary schoolers' homemade prizes included some chopstick guns that fell apart immediately, and, of course, not everything went smoothly, but it was cute watching them hard at work, and I had a great time.
Everyone gave us a very warm welcome, hehe♥
After playing a game, the kids who had been running the game corners would switch off to be customers or watch the stores. As we watched them play, Chika and I sat down to rest under a tree next to a soccer goal on the outer edge of the courtyard.

"Thanks for coming today♥" Chika says straight to me with another innocent smile.
Ack, she got the drop on me again!
I panic. "D-Don't mention it. Thanks for inviting me. I had a lot of fun♥"
Once I finally get the words out, Chika responds, "Really!? You had fun? That's great♥♥ So, actually, I was kinda worried. There's nothing to do in Uchiura besides the summer festivals and the fishing co-op's events, so even the Children's Beach Festival is kind of a big thing for us. I thought you'd be really underwhelmed since you're from the city." Chika tilts her head slightly and lets out an embarrassed laugh.
When she mentions it, I think about the festivals and events they had back in Akihabara: the constant fairs going on somewhere in the city, and maid cafe employees on the streets, the crowds gathered around idols' mini stages, and I realize something.
Yeah, it's completely different.

It's completely different, but still...
"I like this kinda stuff," I reply without thinking.
It might be different from a city-going high schooler's typical idea of a weekend event, but...
"I thought it was a wonderful event♥" I say. The laughter of the children echoes through the sunlit courtyard.
Chika laughs happily, "Yay, you're so nice, Riko! I was right♪ I'm the youngest of 3 sisters, right? So, I've grown a spoiled kid radar that lets me detect nice people♥"
Chika uses her fingers two make two horns on her head, and spins around like a fighting bull.
The two of us inadvertently break into laughter as our eyes meet.

After resting, Chika lets a few words slip from her mouth, as if talking to herself. "I went to this school too, but it was lonely because we never really had any customers. There were more people back when my sisters were here, though."
Her eyes gaze off into the distance, looking over the grounds.
"Since we didn't have any customers, we'd just switch between being shopkeepers and customers ourselves. Of course, we had more than enough people for that, but it was kinda boring, and sad, too."
Chika pauses to pick out her words.
"It's kinda... sad, isn't it?" Then, she sticks her tongue out and shyly laughs, "tehehe," again. "This town doesn't have enough people, and nothing can change that at this point."
Yeah.
I think I finally understand now.
I'm a bit slow on the uptake.
Even now, Chika's still smiling.
Chika wanted to bring customers in for the younger students, and that's why she's here.
Even if everyone else was too busy, she'd come alone if she had to.
For some reason, Chika's sentiment make me happy.
And, a little bit hurt.
I start aching within my chest.
Chika's far, far nicer than I could ever be.
"And, once the girls in Uchiura's elementary school are our age, Ura High will be long gone, and none of them will have a local high school to go to. Everyone's gonna go their separate ways."
Ah...
My heart starts beating faster and faster, and it starts feeling a little painful.
"When I think of that, I feel like I have to at least make today a bit more exciting. There's really nothing I can do, but it's a little more exciting just to have customers snow up, right? Maybe I think like that because my family runs an inn, ehehe♥ Oh, so anyway, that's why I'm so glad you came today! Thanks, I mean it♥ You saw everyone staring wide-eyed at the city girl, right!? Seriously, you're pretty, and you're cute, and fashionable, and cool, I think you've totally gotta be a school idol... Oops, sorry, I know you don't like it when I do that, but if you ever have a change of heart..."

I didn't process the last part of Chika's words.
My heart was pounding with the realization that Chika loved this town more than I had ever imagined until now.

It's true that back in Akihabara, where I'm from, there are more people, and fancier events, and even with the declining birth rate, there's still a bunch of high schools around, as normal. And, with all of them to choose from, I thought it was only natural that everyone would get separated.
But in this town, there's only one elementary school.
And one middle school, and one high school.

And a home-made event is this precious to them.

Can I...
Can I really become one of them, too?
I'm still not sure yet.
But, there's just one thing I can say.
I don't know when I started feeling this way, but...
I like this town.
Blue skies and white clouds as far as the eye can see. The sparkling sea, and verdant trees everywhere in sight.
When I was in the city, surrounded by skyscrapers, I had never seen a view like this before.
And amidst all that, I thought it was all I could do to just nervously navigate through each unfamiliar day.
But, before I knew it, I had fallen in love with this place.
Even now, as I sit in a corner of the sun-bleached grounds, just looking up at the sky, I feel my chest opening up like a flower.

It must be because Chika's here.
It must be because Chika's love for this town made me realize something important. That's what I think.
Chika's vast and direct heart is like the direct sunlight in this town.
I'm glad I moved here♥
Now, I sincerely do believe that.
Somehow,I feel like I'm waiting for a moment when I can transform.

03 - You Watanabe

I'm Diving Into...

Splooosh!

I hear the sea spray somewhere in the distance.
Oh, someone's jumping into the sea.
Once I think of that, I can't sit still any longer.
My body is itching to move.

As if the sunlight beating down on the back of my uniform is pushing me forward,
I stop for one moment and take a deep breath...
Ready, set, go!
I count down in my heart, and run down the street along the sea.
My short, pale gray uniform skirt flies up and flutters about my thighs.
But, there's nobody in sight on the street this afternoon.
And the cars passing by wouldn't be looking at me, anyway!
I just keep running.
Oooh yeah, whenever I charge off into the distance, it feels so good♪

For the first time in a while today, I'm borrowing the nearby diving pool for high dive practice.
Just for today, I got permission to skip afterschool practice with Aqours so I could practice diving. Time's ticking down, and more importantly, I just can't wait to dive into that pool♥
So, faster, faster, hurry, hurry!
Come on, legs, you can do better than that!
Let's go! Whoosh♪♪

♥♥♥♥♥

"Gasp, gasp... Phew!"

As the cold water envelops my body, I swim from the center of the 7-meter-deep pool off to the side, and shake off the water dripping down my face.

After 10 dives straight after I reached the pool, I finally take a break.
"Alright, I've done the tucked reverse 3-and-a-half somersault this year, too♥"
I grin and strike a little victory pose as I sit at the poolside, leaving my legs in the water.
It's June, just after the end of Golden Week.
Summer is still far off, but there's already the refreshing combination of the warm, bright sunlight with the cold water.

This seaside diving pool is just barely within running distance from Uchiura.
Normally, this little outdoor pool is only used for lessons for the diving license test, but I got them to let me practice high dives here sometimes.
There're no pools that are actually designed for high diving around here, so it's pretty tough for me, as someone who's trying to become a competitive high diver.
But, when I'm practicing in this little pool, I get the water and the air and the wind and the sun, and everything else in the pool all to myself! So, it feels really nice.
I've always liked the sea, and swimming, and diving.
Sometimes, even I wonder, hey, why do I like diving so much, anyway?
Well, now that I think about it, maybe it's my family's influence?

See, my dad's a sailor. He's actually the captain of a huge ferry.
You know, being a captain is a pretty big deal♥
He wears a clean white uniform with gold epaulettes.
His big cap is, of course, white as well, but with a sharp black bill. It's really cool.
When he's on a liner headed to the outlying islands, he usually only comes home once a week, but whenever I wait for my dad at the port...
From across the horizon, I can see a massive ship come into view, as if it's silently gliding across the surface of the water.
Is he here yet? As I wait impatiently, the thought that my own dad is in control of that gigantic ship gets me so excited that I can't sit still anymore.

"Daaaad!"
Unable to wait any longer, I hop towards the bow of the ship, waving my hands and screaming wildly from atop the small levee next to the pier.
But, the captain's always the last one off the ship, so obviously my dad wouldn't come out for a while.
As I watch the stream of passengers slowly proceed across the pier, I get bored and start playing around.
"I'm Captain You! Full speed ahead, steady as she goes♪"
I pretend I'm the captain and run around the levee.
"Hard left rudder! Caution off the port stern!"
I shout to the winds without understanding the meaning of those words.
As I run with arms stretched out to my sides, I think to myself, one day,

when I'm older, I'm gonna be an awesome captain and sail a ship across the seas, just like my dad!
As I think, I start getting excited again, and while running along the thin levee, I jump too far, and fall off the edge of the levee and into the sea.
Suddenly, the world inverts.
And, cold water and bubbles wrap around my body.
Once I drop into the sea, there's no up and no down, and nothing but blue as far as I can see.
As I focus all my efforts on finding the surface, my face finally comes out, and gravity goes back to normal.
My usual world returns to me.
The sky is above, and the sea is below.
The next thing I see is the bow of the ship in front of me, towering above me like a huge white cliff.
"Ooh, I bet it'd feel great to jump off the tip of that thing and into the sea♪"
For some reason, that's what I think as I look up at that cliff.
I probably wanted to see that world of blue again.
To go deeper, and longer.

Yeah, that's probably why I started high diving.
When I say it like that, it must sound incredibly simple-minded and stupid.
But I'm simple-minded and stupid anyway, so oh well♥
Either way, it really does feel super good to jump off of high places and into the water!

I stretch backwards, and, remaining in that position by the pool, I look up at the clear, cloud-free sky above.
Come to think of it, I was treated like a simple girl again today.
Suddenly, I see the faces of Chika, Riko, and the rest of Aqours in the sky.

Today, I stayed with Aqours for as long as I could before I left school, and was hurrying along through the shoeboxes, when one of my classmates spoke to me.
"Why would you join Aqours when you wanted to be a high-diver, and even the school had high hopes for your future?" she asked me. "Wouldn't that get in the way of my practice?"
Well, I'm at a loss since you asked me so seriously all of a sudden, I thought.
But, anyway,
"Yeah, but there's no diving pools around here so I can't practice my high dives every day. It doesn't make much of a difference, you see?" I laugh.
"Well, that's fine, then." The girl mumbled. "Actually, maybe you don't realize it yourself, but you're really good at diving. Your dives so beautiful, I'm a fan too, and just the other day, a recruiter for the national team came by. You might be too simple to give it much thought, but that'd be unimaginable for any regular little town. You gotta work hard and stay focused!"
She had a really serious look on her face and sounded very determined. After she left, I was kinda shocked for a moment.
And then, well, it was kinda embarrassing, and tilted my head to one side, wondering what to do.
Hm, that sounded like a compliment and an insult at the same time.
Either way, am I really that unreliable? Despite the way I seem, I always follow through on everything I decide to do. Or at least, that’s the impression I get.
Whether it's for diving tournaments, class rep work, helping out at the neighborhood association, or even when it's my turn to do chores at school.
Oh, but when it comes to my grades at school, I do mess up sometimes.
Ehehe!

Well, it's true that I'm simple, and I'm not great at doing two things at once.
Even I consider myself that type where, when I get obsessed with something, it really just fills my brain, and I can't think of anything else.
But, when I get obsessed with something, it's because I like it. If there's two things I like, two things I love at the same time, I can be obsessed with both of them.
That's how I feel, at least.
And right now, what I love is doing things together with Chika, and Riko, and the rest of Aqours!
At first, I joined Aqours just for Chika.
I mean, that's the way it's always been. With so few kids around here, when you're playing dodgeball or basketball, or anything else new, you've gotta cooperate and join up as often as you can, or you can't get anything done.
That's why, when I saw Chika recruiting so hard, I just naturally decided to join.
I'm still not so confident about the singing or dancing or the ribbons and frills, though.
I'm just a simple girl who does sports, after all♪
I mean, Chika wanted to do it so badly, so I couldn't leave her alone, right?♥
And, it was actually a lot more fun than I expected. I worked harder at it than I thought I would.
Even now, I'm still a bit surprised at what's happened lately.
Why is that?
Because Chika and the others are working so hard?
Am I being dragged along by them?
Hm, that can't be right. I'm not the type that can be adjusted so easily, I think.
I realize something.
Yeah, that was it all along!
Right now, even though I'm here to practice the high dives I love so much, I'm suddenly thinking about Aqours. This has never happened before, ever.
When I'm diving, I always get obsessed with practice, and then, the next thing I know, it's already sundown.

But, no matter what I do, I can't stop seeing it.
As I stare into the sky, I see their faces.
What are they practicing right now?
I wish I could get back and join them.
I wanna practice our new song with them.
Oh, I know!
I've done the reverse 3-and-a-half somersault already, so I can finish my practice here, right?
Yeah, that's right! Sure I can♥
Okay, wait for me, guys!
I'm gonna run at mach speed back to practice!
I just love Aqours♥
And I hope everyone else feels the same way!

Full speed ahead, steady as she goes!